

# Intermontanus

Published by the Utah Association of Herpetologists

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Volume 3

September 1994

Number 5

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## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### UTAH EDUCATION COMMITTEE

At the last UtAH meeting it was decided that we should form an Education Committee to promote the education of amphibians and reptiles within the state. The Committee will look into a number of issues related to education, such as: Should UtAH sponsor public education "shows" and if so what should be presented? What is the feasibility of setting a booth up at the State Fair? The committee will also establish guidelines for those who represent UtAH at an educational booth, show, or talk. Other topics will also be addressed by the committee and committee members will be expected to help with research into these issues (you can not join the committee to offer input only—we need output too!).

Currently we need a UtAH member willing to chair the committee and several members to sit on the committee. If you are interested in getting involved with the committee contact UtAH or come to the next meeting.

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### UTAH MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 21ST

Our next meeting will be held on 21 September 1994 at 7:00 in the U of U Biology building room #212. The speaker will be Frank Fast of the International Geckonoid Foundation and he will talk about the geckos of the South Pacific. Frank has spent a lot of time in the South Pacific studying geckos. He has also bred a number of gecko species and currently maintains about 100 geckos. This meeting should be a good one and I hope the turnout will be better than the last few meetings. Frank lives in Nebraska and it would be disappointing to have a mere 10 people show up.

In addition to the talk, Rush Larabee has kindly offered to give away one of his captive born blood pythons, *Python curtus*. The snake will be given away in a special drawing for UtAH members only. We will also have a drawing for a book and a t-shirt for all those who attend the meeting. Bring your friends!

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### VARANID BIBLIOGRAPHY IS UNDERWAY

Work is in progress on a comprehensive, multi-volume bibliography of the Varanidae (living and fossil forms). Material for this work is being compiled by Peter D. Strimple and Mark K. Bayless. It is our intention to publish the first volume sometime in 1995, with subsequent volumes appearing at infrequent intervals, as material is collected and indexed. Literature covering every possible aspect of these reptiles will be indexed, including: holdings of museum collections, fossil records, status in the wild, systematics, natural history, physiology, growth studies, behavior, captive husbandry and reproduction, and much more. It is believed that a work of this magnitude and comprehensiveness will be invaluable to both amateurs and professionals alike, particularly since it will be indexed by species.

Between us we have access to a great number of books, journals, periodicals, etc., from all over the world. However, there is a large amount of literature that we either have limited or no access to. The accuracy of each entry is extremely important, and we feel that the best way to ensure this is to have the material "in hand". Therefore,

we are soliciting any papers, books, photocopies of book chapters, etc., from anyone who has written about varanids. It is most important to us that each literature entry be as correct and informative as possible. When sending a paper from a journal, periodical, etc., it should include all pertinent bibliographic information (complete journal title, publication date, and the volume and issue number), and when sending a copy of a book chapter please include publisher and city, date, and total pages in book. We would appreciate the cooperation of varanid enthusiasts worldwide. Publications may be sent to either author.

Although we are currently writing to people to solicit papers, it is impossible to contact everyone that has written about varanids. Consequently we hope that people will send copies of their publications, even if they are not directly contacted. Every effort will be made to acknowledge contributors to this project.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

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### NEW PUBLICATIONS

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The Southwestern Herpetological Society recently published *Herpetology of the North American Deserts: Proceedings of a Symposium* edited by Philip R. Brown and John W. Wright. The book contains 17 chapters covering a broad diversity of herpetological topics and herpetological aspects of the three North American hot deserts and Baja California. There are over 300 pages and 100 photographs in both color and black & white. The pre-publication price was \$25.00 but I am not sure what the regular price is. For more information or to order contact SWHS Tri-Counties Chapter, P.O. Box 3881, Santa Barbara, CA 93130.

Azemiops S.A. Herpetological Data Center just released a new reference in herpetology, *Endoglyphs and Other Major Venomous Snakes of the World. A Checklist* by P. Golay, H.M. Smith, D.G. Broadley, J.R. Dixon, C. McCarthy, J.C. Rage, B. Schätti, and M. Toriba. The book features a catalogue of the potentially dangerous snakes of the world: 864 living or fossil species and subspecies, assigned to 97 genera; original citations, type localities and updated ranges; exhaustive synonymies and present location of types; a preface by Carl Gans; a bibliography of over 2,100 references; and an index of over 10,600 terms (See book review on page 35).

The book costs 75 SwissFrancs (about \$50) and can be paid for with Visa/Mastercard or an international money order/cashiers check (add 10 SwissFrancs for surface mail or 15 for airmail).

To order send credit card information, including number and expiration date, to Azemiops S.A. Herpetological Data Center, 8, route des Ravières, 1258 Perly, Geneva, Switzerland.

There is a new issue of Das Tierreich/The Animal Kingdom: A Characterization & Compilation of all Current Animal Groups available from Walter de Gruyter, Inc. This volume (109), *Familia Gekkonidae (Reptilia, Sauria) 1. Australia and Oceania* by Aaron M. Bauer (with the collaboration of Klaus Henie) contains the most

complete taxonomic and bibliographic reference available for this diverse and biologically significant group of reptiles. This book provides keys, chresonyms, and distribution information for the more than 180 recognized species and subspecies of gekkonid lizards occurring in Australia, New Zealand, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

The book contains 306 pages at the low cost of \$1.26 per page! Yes the book cost \$386.00. If you are rich enough to order a copy you can do so from Walter de Gruyter, Inc., 200 Saw Mill River Road, Hawthorne, NY 10532.

The Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles is publishing their Herpetological Circular No. 23, *Scientific and Common Names for the Amphibians and Reptiles of Mexico in English and Spanish* by Ernest A. Liner. The book is available at a special prepublication price for SSAR members, \$10.00 ppd. before September 30. Nonmembers can purchase the book for \$13.00 ppd.

This exhaustive work is a complete listing of the 1,539 taxa that comprise the herpetofauna of Mexico. The author provides ready access to the common and scientific names of the 206 genera, 956 species, and 583 races of amphibians and reptiles found in Mexico, and includes the name of the describer(s) and the date(s) of publication for each.

The Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles is also publishing the book, *Captive Management and Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles* edited by James B. Murphy, Kraig Adler & Joseph T. Collins, with a forward by Gerald Durrell. This new book (written by 70 leading authorities from throughout the world representing universities, museums, conservation organizations, zoos, aquariums, and the private sector) is a current review of techniques for managing and breeding animals in captivity for purposes of conservation. The emphasis is on endangered species, special and new techniques, and on diagnosing problems, yet the coverage is comprehensive and includes a broad array of issues.

- **General issues:** Herpetological conservation from a global perspective, and the roles of zoos and aquariums.
- **Reproduction and Management:** Nutrition of carnivorous reptiles, nutrition of herbivorous reptiles, effects of temperature, light

requirements, veterinary procedures for acquisition and release, the physical environment for incubation of reptilian eggs, conservation and management of tortoises, chemoreception in the feeding behavior of reptiles, captive maintenance and lineage senescence, conservation of commercially important reptiles, reproductive strategies and conservation of tropical frogs, control of amphibian reproduction, reproductive patterns of amphibians and reptiles, implications of phenotypic plasticity, assessing genetic variation in captive and natural populations, inducing reproduction in reptiles, ethological approaches to reproductive success, and experimental manipulations of clutch size and offspring size.

- **Model Programs:** Separate chapters focus on particularly successful programs. These cover salamanders, caecilians, dendrobatid frogs, hylid frogs, bufonid toads, mud turtles, Galapagos reptiles, iguanid lizards, day geckos, Old World chameleons, prehensile-tailed skinks, boid snakes, colubrid snakes, rattlesnakes, crocodilians, and tuataras.
- **Future Directions:** Role of the private sector, future research at academic institutions, and zoo programs for management, breeding, and conservation.

Specifications: about 400 pages, 27 photographs, 50 figures, 55 tables, 1 color frontispiece, index, format 8.5 x 11 inches (21.5 x 28 cm), cloth bound. To be published November 1994. The book costs \$58 (\$35 to SSAR members before 1 November 1994) plus \$2 p/h (\$4 non-USA orders). However if ten people want this book we can order it as a group for \$45.50 each ppd. To get this deal we must order by 15 October 1994. If you are not an SSAR member and want this book please let UtAH know ASAP.

Send orders to: Dr. Robert D. Aldridge, Publications Secretary, Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, Department of Biology, St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO 63103, USA (telephone 314-658-3900 or -3916; Fax 314-658-3117). Make checks payable to "SSAR"; receipt sent on request only. Orders may be charged to MasterCard or Visa (account number and expiration date required). Price list of SSAR publications and membership applications available on request.

## RESEARCH UPDATE

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND TEMPERATURE-DEPENDENT SEX DETERMINATION IN REPTILES

The possible effect of global warming on reptiles which have temperature-dependent sex determination was discussed in a recent paper by Fredric J. Janzen (1994. Climate change and temperature-dependent sex determination in reptiles. Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences, USA. 91:7487-7490). Janzen studied a population of painted turtles, *Chrysemys picta*, on an island in the Mississippi River, Illinois. The study lasted from 1988 to 1993 and included 390 natural nests.

With the exception of 1993, when all the nests were destroyed by floods, the average July temperature was correlated with the sex ratio of several randomly chosen eggs from the nests. Janzen found a very strong correlation ( $r=-0.91$ ) between the temperature and the percent of males hatching. During cool years the hatchlings consisted of 100% males and vice-versa for warm years. Using the average July temperature for each year since 1942 Janzen predicted an overall sex ratio of about 1:1 (males 47.8%).

Using this data and the temperature predictions for the next 100 years, during global warming, Janzen predicts that virtually all nests will produce females except during the coolest years. He also predicts the population will not be able to react fast enough to this change because of habitat fragmentation and the accelerated rate of expected warming as compared to historic warming trends. If his predictions are correct global warming will have a devastating effect on several reptiles species.

However, a recent essay by Richard C. Vogt (1994. Temperature

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#### *Intermontanus*

**Editor:** Breck Bartholomew  
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**Meeting Coordinator:** Mike Nordfelt

**Membership:** \$7.00/year; includes six issues of  
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controlled sex determination as a tool for turtle conservation. Chelonian Conservation and Biology. 1(2):159-162) argues that a sex ratio of 1:1 may not be the best way to maintain a turtle species. Vogt suggests that conservation programs which artificially incubate turtle eggs should produce more females than males instead of the current 1:1 sex ratio. Since male turtles breed with more than one female and they breed every year instead of every couple of years, the population would increase faster with fewer males. Vogt does not discuss the possible effect this would have on the genetics of the population because of the decreased effective population size caused by fewer males. However it is still questionable if inbreeding effects natural populations, which are still under the full influence of selection pressures, as it does in captive populations which are relieved of many selection pressures.

Given Vogt's argument and Janzen's data it is difficult to say if global warming would be devastating to turtle populations or a blessing in disguise. I sincerely hope it is more the latter.

## FEATURES

### THE UTAH ALLIGATOR LIZARD

George W. Spencer, Jr.

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In the United States there are five species of alligator lizards in the genera *Elgaria* and *Gerrhonotus* (Collins 1990). Species naturally occur in Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas with an introduced population in Nevada (Stebbins 1985, Conant and Collins 1991). No alligator lizards are believed to occur in Utah.

However, in 1945 Angus M. Woodbury described a subspecies of Alligator Lizard from Utah. The type specimen was collected in 1933 from Sink Valley. Sink Valley is located south of Alton and about 20 miles north of Kanab in Kane County, Utah. Woodbury named the lizard *Gerrhonotus* (now *Elgaria*) *coeruleus utahensis*.

Hobart M. Smith (1946) noted the newly described subspecies in the Handbook of Lizards. Karl P. Schmidt (1954) also included the lizard in a list of omissions from the sixth edition of the check list of North American amphibians and reptiles and gave it the common name of Utah Alligator Lizard. Robert C. Stebbins (1954) also mentioned the lizard but questioned its status in amphibians and reptiles of western North America.

During the twenty-five years following the collection of the type specimen herpetologists made many attempts to obtain additional specimens but none were found. Finally, in 1959 Wilmer W. Tanner examined the type specimen and concluded *Gerrhonotus* (=*Elgaria*) *coeruleus utahensis* was probably a synonym of *Gerrhonotus* (=*Elgaria*) *coeruleus shastensis* (Shasta alligator lizard) and not a distinct subspecies.

Since the Shasta alligator lizard naturally occurs in northern California and southern Oregon, Tanner also tried to find a possible explanation for the occurrence of an individual in southern Utah. Tanner's research revealed there was a CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp in Alton, Utah from June to November of 1933. It was apparently common for the boys in CCC camps to keep pets which they carried from camp to camp. Tanner believed the type specimen for *Gerrhonotus* (=*Elgaria*) *coeruleus utahensis* was a lizard transported to Utah as a pet.

Whatever its origin, the Utah alligator lizard is not considered a valid subspecies and alligator lizards are not believed to occur naturally in Utah.

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## HUSBANDRY & HERPETOCULTURE

### HERPETOCULTURE TODAY: ONE PERSON'S THOUGHTS

Stan Draper

Salt Lake City UT

Talking to a friend of mine the other day, he brought up one of the bad changes in recent herpetoculture. Too many people are getting into making money with reptiles and amphibians and not doing it merely for the joy of working with the animals and possibly making a little coin besides. I, for one, count myself among those guilty. Though, hopefully, to a lesser degree than most.

The worst of these people do not see their animals as anything other than dollar signs. This, to me, is perverting the art of herpetoculture. It has lead to breeding animals to produce new and different colors or hybrids that could or should never exist. It has also brought about the exploitation of natural resources. You can not import thirty-thousand individuals of a single species without causing detriment in one way or another.

One of the most obvious dollar breeders even advertises with the words "the ultimate investment animal." I am not saying that these people do not take care of the animals. They do have to take care of their "investments." What I am saying is that they do not have these animals because they are unusual, pretty or have interesting behavior. They raise them for the MONEY they can make because the animals are rare, beautiful or have atypical habits.

Another type of perverted "herpetoculturist" is the one who obtains and breeds a new animal for the express purpose of claiming bragging rights. These people go to any length to own a rare animal. If they are successful with the animal and breed it, they immediately publish an article which usually does not contain all of the pertinent or correct information. Not only are they patting themselves on the back, but they also don't want anyone outside their little circle to know the whole and truthful tale behind the acquisition and breeding. Oh what some won't do for their fifteen minutes of fame.

I guess you can call me a purist, for I cannot see any reason other than money for some of the breeding I have seen or heard about over the past ten years or so. Just what is the purpose or reason for "jungle-corns", "reticmese", mex-pyros, "blizzards," or "blood-reds"? Money, money, money and an itsy bit of notoriety. The only things this kind of irresponsible breeding results in are the weakening of the genetics and the corruption of the ethics which should be an

integral part of this endeavor called captive breeding not mix and match.

Another ethics buster is the putrefaction of the import business. When somebody imports thirty-thousand individuals of one species, he/she/it is thinking of only one thing and that is their fat wallet. They don't care that probably one-third to one-half of these animals will die within their first year of captivity. They don't care that they are ruining the genetic base of the wild population. They really don't care that they destroy the market for captive breeders. And they really aren't thinking about the future. With this kind of irresponsible, unintelligent money-grubbing, we will all see more unwanted rules and regulations. These are the same types who are under suspicion or indictment for illegal doings in the import business.

Like I said in the beginning, I am guilty to a certain degree. I am in business as a breeder. The couple of things that set me and others like me apart are that we work with the animals because we love what they are and the satisfaction of being able to simulate nature to the point of getting successful breeding and hatching. Oh yes, we do like to make money at it, because what's better than a hobby that pays for itself and a little more. Though I have been at this "business" seriously for about seven years now and have yet to see a profit, I am not about to quit.

Hopefully, we can slow this trend towards "money-grubbing" by encouraging youngsters and oldsters alike who keep "herps," to keep at it just for the enjoyment of seeing our fellow creatures at their finest. Give anybody and everybody a pat on the back for a successful breeding of any animal, not just the expensive or rare ones. If we can get even one more herpetoculturist started by helping them obtain their first starter animal by either giving it to them or letting them make payments or allowing them to work it off, the whole hobby will benefit. Once we get them started, then all it will take is a little guidance and encouragement to hopefully keep them on the right track.

Just one person's thoughts.

Questions, comments and tirades welcome

*Editor's note: Remember, anyone wishing to comment on something published in Intermontanus is welcome to do so. The editorial policy regarding comments is that the original author has the opportunity to respond comments on his/her paper. After that the discussion is over unless a third party joins in the discussion. Everyone's views are welcome.*

#### CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE NOT-SO-KIND

Greg Bracken

Reprinted from the Bulletin of the Alberta Reptile and Amphibian Society. 3(1):17.

Everyone who has kept reptiles for any length of time has a few humorous stories. You could say this one is painfully funny.

A few years ago a friend asked if I would be interested in buying his large but "tame" Burmese python. The price was very reasonable and the animal looked healthy.

Guy brought it over one evening while both Julian and I were home. We unbagged it in the bathroom so it could have a warm soaking before going into quarantine. It seemed cool to the touch so a nice warm bath was just the thing to perk it up.

While it was soaking, we showed Guy some of our new animals. Every now and then I would peak in and check on the Burmese just to make sure it wasn't thrashing the bathroom. It was calmly soaking, not moving from the tub.

Guy said he would get the snake and take it downstairs. As he reached for it, she came flying at him mouth agape! Luckily, he jumped back just in the nick of time. Guy said, "Gee, that's only the second time that's happened." I seemed to recall the first time. Phrases like "I almost lost my hand" and "there was blood all over

the place" came to mind. I told him to leave her with me and I would bring her out when she calmed down.

After a few minutes she seemed okay so I gently picked her up, trying to not restrain her too much so she wouldn't flip out again. I had about three and a half feet of snake in front of me as I stepped into the hallway. No sooner was I out of the bathroom when she started to violently whip back and forth, then suddenly dove down between my legs (my life flashed before my eyes and my voice went up two octaves!). There was an excruciating pain in my butt. She had bit me on my right cheek! My first reaction was to leap straight up and let out a yell that would wake the dead!

Julian and Guy came running into the hallway and then stopped and stared at the sight of me hopping around with a ten foot snake chewing on my butt. Instead of getting help, all I got was two guys grabbing the wall for support while doubling over with laughter and tears streaming down their cheeks. Thankfully the Burmese let go and calmed down. Julian and Guy relieved me of my burden and put her away while I retired to the bathroom to check the damage. My pride was hurt more than anything else. My jeans were ruined with a big hole in the back (Julian wanted to hang them on the wall!). It was a little uncomfortable sitting for the next few days, but at least I didn't have to dig any teeth out of my rump.

Lesson learned: never trust a large snake, and get someone to help you handle it!

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

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##### THE NATURAL HISTORY OF WEST INDIAN BOAS

Peter J. Tolson and Robert W. Henderson. 1993. R & A Publishing limited, Somerset, England, 125 pp. (\$79.95)

The compilation of subject matter covered by this book has been long awaited. The data concerning description, habitat, diet, and other aspects of husbandry is becoming more in demand as interest in these snakes grows. The need for more captive breeding and rearing of all these animals is expanding fast due to the decline in natural populations and habitat.

Although I must thank the authors for their effort, I also have to ask if this was a rush job? And if so, for what reason? I wonder about the rush job because of the setup of the text and the paucity of good photographs.

To me the aim of this volume was, or at least should have been, directed at the private sector of breeders. The impression I got while reading and scanning the text was that this was a very large scientific paper aimed at academia. With thirty years of West Indies experience between the authors, I would have thought they could come up with something to make the reading a little less dusty.

The statement in the introduction that it will be obvious to readers that there are large gaps of information, gives me further cause to believe this work was rushed. Perhaps it was rushed because of the desire to be the first one on the market or to make money to further the research needed on these wonderful animals.

The other glaring point that makes this appear to be a rush job, is the general poor quality of photographs. From the out of focus dust cover (repeated elsewhere in the text) to the over flashed *Corallus enydris cooki* photos on page 98-99, there are very few good quality photographs. The best are from James Bridges. Vlad T. Jirousek and Terry Wilkens also deserve mentioning for their work.

I cannot recommend this book as an essential part of a general herpetological library. If these animals are the main focus of your interest and you have money left over, you can find helpful information within the covers and comprehensive bibliography. Otherwise, borrow it from somebody like me (sorry I do not loan books) who was crazy enough to lay out the bucks.

Stan Draper  
Salt Lake City, Utah

## ENDOGLYPHS AND OTHER MAJOR VENOMOUS SNAKES OF THE WORLD. A CHECKLIST

Philippe Golay, Hobart M. Smith, Donald G. Broadley, James R. Dixon, Colin McCarthy, Jean-Claude Rage, Beat Schätti, and Michihisa Toriba. 1994. Azemiops S.A., Aïre-Geneva, Switzerland. 478 pp. 75 Swiss Franc (about \$50).

Philippe Golay begins the introduction to this book with the following quote from Harold G. Cogger, "Taxonomy is a matter of personal opinion..." (italics his). He goes on to say how this quote inspired him to attempt to produce a consensual work on the taxonomy of venomous snakes. To accomplish this he solicited the help of the other authors. As a general comment he adds that in order to "promote stability, we have tried to be as conservative as possible." In being conservative they have added taxonomical opinions to some of the family and generic accounts. These opinions are well referenced so the reader will be aware of the evidence for and against the taxonomic arrangement. He ends the introduction with a quote of his own, "Taxonomy is a matter of *consensus*..." (italics and bold his).

The coverage of the book is broad and includes fossil species as well as the colubrid genera *Dispholidus*, *Elapomorphus*, *Rhabdophis*, *Tachymenis*, and *Thelotornis*. However these colubrids are divided into two families, Colubridae and Natricidae. The recognition of the family Natricidae is unexpected given the conservative nature of the book. Two papers are cited in the opinion of the family Natricidae, Underwood (1967) and Dowling (1986). Although I agree with the distinction of the family Natricidae, I am not sure I like citing an unpublished source as the reason for recognizing it (e.g., Dowling 1986). However, even more disturbing is the fact that the authors chose to divide the obviously polyphyletic group Colubridae, yet they split the Elapidae and chose to recognize the obsolete Hydrophiidae! Several authors have presented data indicating Hydrophiidae is an unnatural group with some members being

more closely related to elapids than other hydrophiids.

Along these same lines the authors have chosen to follow the classification presented by Dowling and Jenner (1988) as an appendix to another paper (also not peer-reviewed) and split the pitvipers (Crotalidae) from the vipers (viperidae). This appendix is presented without supporting data and suggests several taxonomic changes which have since been shown to be inconsistent with recovered history.

Unfortunately, it is very clear that the authors have chosen to utilize the morphological species concept in determining the relationships of venomous snakes. I say unfortunately because the morphological species concept is obsolete, or should be, and the evolutionary species concept, which classifies organisms as evolving units which are genetically related, should have been used.

We see the morphological species concept being used on the species level as well. For example, the authors chose to ignore a fine paper by Werman (1992) which indicates *Porthidium* is an unnatural group. Werman went on to describe a new genus, *Atropoides*, which made the group monophyletic (i.e., natural). However, Golay, et al. continue to recognize the polyphyletic *Porthidium*.

Personally, I view taxonomy as any other aspect of science. Any given classification is merely a hypothesis as to the evolutionary relationships of an organism. Although taxonomic stability is desired, we should not feel obligated to adopt an inferior classification simply to keep people happy. An evolutionary based taxonomy far exceeds the importance of stability for convenience sake. Anyone doing comparative research must know how to properly account for the phylogenetic constraints; a task which is impossible without an accurate taxonomy. This idea of consensus, or more aptly convenience, which Golay strives for is certainly not met in this book and may actually be more harmful than previous classifications.

Despite my several taxonomic complaints, this book should prove to be useful to those in need of taxonomic information about venomous snakes. The literature cited section contains a wealth of information which will prove most valuable to many readers. However, this book should not be thought of as the last, or best, word in the classification of venomous snakes.

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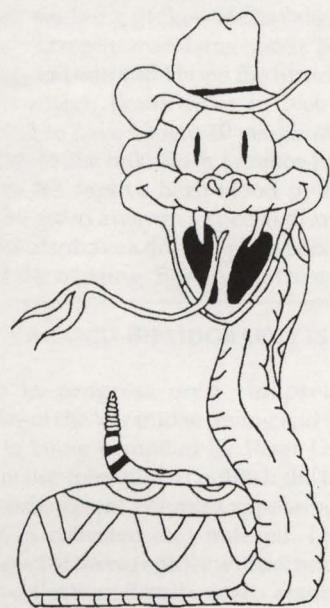
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195 West 200 North  
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**Thank you** George Spencer and Stan Draper for the articles. Keep up the good work! It would be nice to get articles from other members too.

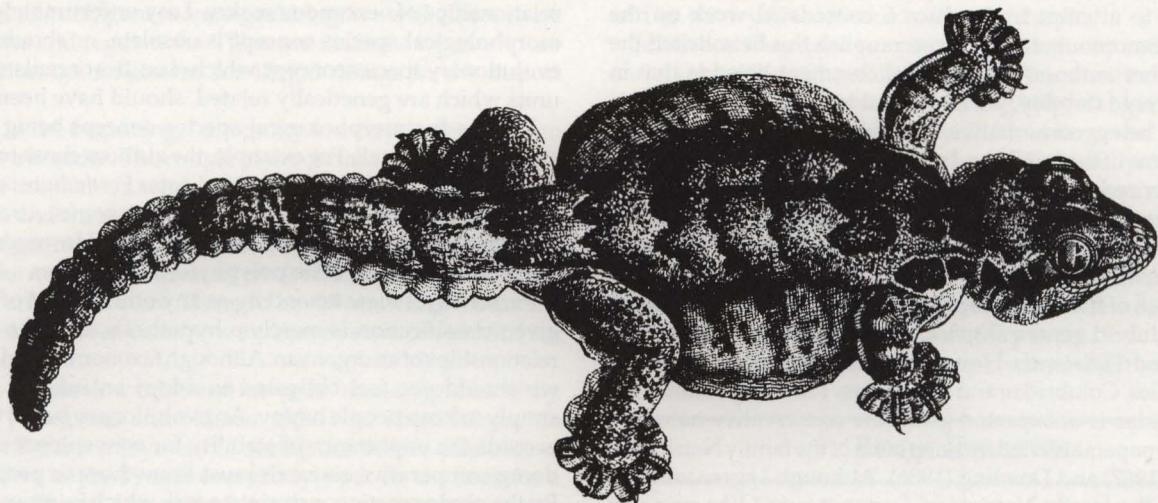


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**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, 21 September 1994 at 7:00 pm in room 212 of the University of Utah's Biology Building. **Frank Fast**, the U.S. Representative for the International Geckonoid Research Foundation will present a talk "**Geckos of the South Pacific**." After the talk there will be a drawing for a book and a desert tortoise T-Shirt. Also, Rush Larabee is going to give away a baby blood python, *Python curtus*. Call UtAH if you need directions to the U of U Biology building. **See you there!**



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